

**THE SEWARD,
TERRITORY OF ALASKA,
GOLD
RAILWAY
ROBBERY
OF 1926**



Steven Levi

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Box 241467

Anchorage, AK 99524

www.stevelevibooks.com

www.authormasterminds.com

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Late in the Fall of 1926 when the slopes of Mt. Marathon started to pitch snowflakes by the bushel and sleet by the ton the city of Seward a white shroud did become with all folks locked in from September to June thriving on moose meat and dance fiddle tunes.



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It is said in Alaska there are only three months --
all starting with a "J" -- and the sun only shunts
from eastern horizon to the sea on the west
rising at ten all golden in dress
then drops like a stone into the sea
with darkness arriving just after three.



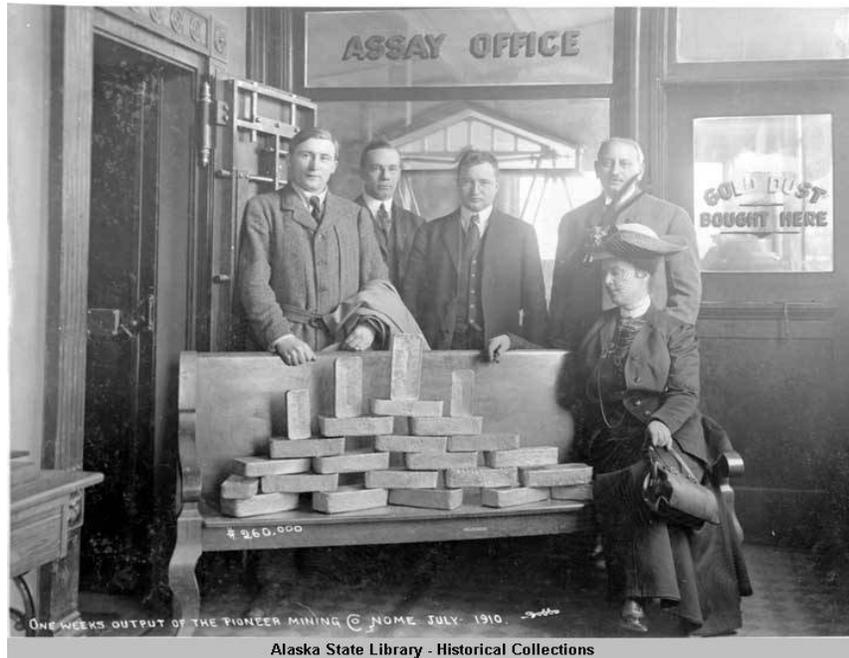
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At the end of October comes Halloween day when the children dress up in any odd way to tramp from their homes as goblins and ghouls in masking and costumes all meant to fool to secure from their neighbors candy and gum while their parents settle in for chitchat and rum.



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As the folks of the city slept snug in their beds
with nary a thought of crime in their heads
a plot was unfolding, delicious in scope,
which required some sweat and a smidgeon of hope
to break into the bank and its vault full of cash
and abscond with the loot over the pass.

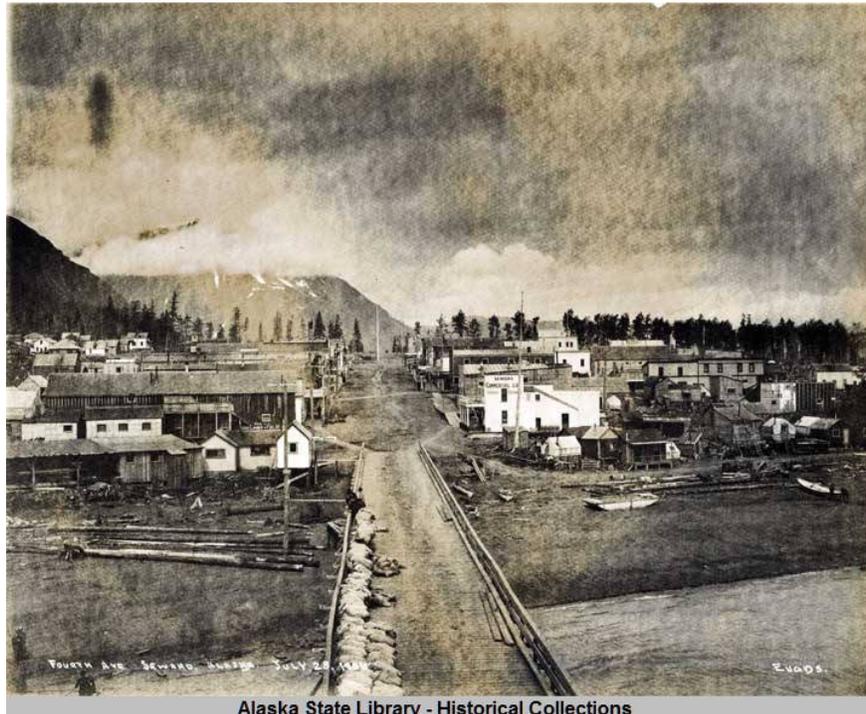




Seward Community Library

As Seward was born as a railway town
no buildings had basements set into the ground;
they were modules on flatcars on the webbing of tracks
which had shuttled the structures forward and back
'til the railroad commission established the town
and anchored all buildings firm to the ground.

As June follows May and each Winter a Spring,
summer to Seward incoming cargo did bring,
cargo by barge load as incoming freight
with cross ties by the ton and whiskey in crates,
boxcars of boots and mutton in shank
to be sent northward all the way to Fairbanks.





University of Alaska Anchorage. Archives & Manuscripts Dept.

Year after year the cargo came in
and the profits grew fatter never to thin
so the structures on rail were secured to the earth
with concrete and rebar sunk into the earth.
Lawns covered the rails rusting deep in the ground
and docking for barges appeared in the Sound.

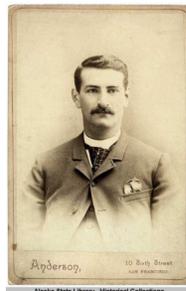


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As the city grew richer and so did the banks transforming their vaults from abandoned planks to iron and steel with reinforced hinges and hired armed guards who eschewed binges. So the burglars abandoned their vault robbery scheme concentrating on the incoming gold stream.

Everyone knew when the nuggets of gold would come down the rails with doré whole from Fairbanks and boomtowns far to the north where miners were thick as curdling cream. Henceforth the booty would go 'cross town in a tank from the boxcar in the station to the five city banks.





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There was only place gold was left on its own,
when no one was watching the gift from the loam.
Between Fairbanks and Seward in a boxcar
the security guards were all kept afar
for one could not steal from a moving freight train
so the thieves began a storming their brains.

The scheme that was hatched was both clever and bold
as such was needed to steal a boxcar of gold.
When the freight train came south from northern depots
it was often stalled by the mountains of snow
which covered the tracks coming over the pass
stalling the train until the storm passed.



TYRRETT TRAIN - 15000000

JOHNSEN

Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks



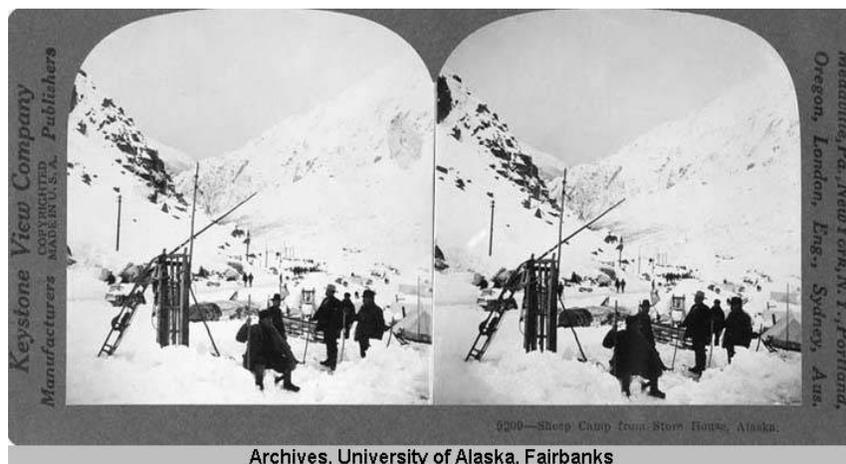
EAST RIDGE FROM ROCKY MOUNTAIN

WEBER

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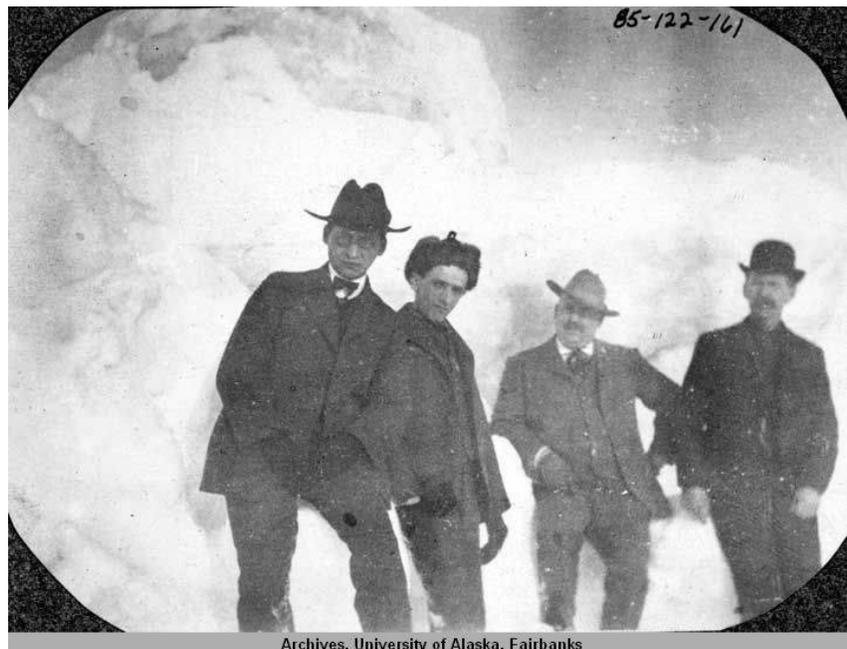
On the crest of the pass was a spur line left to rot which, at one time, led to a mine long forgot which, in its day, produced just enough gold to spur a stampede. Then, like a bunghole that quickly goes dry, the rush crashed to a halt when it was revealed the strike had been a salt.





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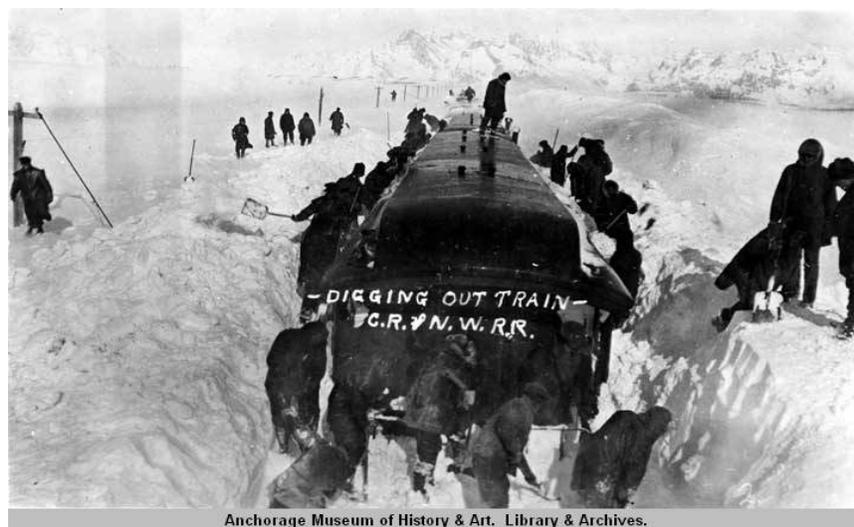
But the rail tracks remained so the cabal had a chance to switch the gold car before the train could advance down from the pass covered with snow to the city of Seward and the banks down below. The plan was so simple, surprising the four, was that no one had tried this before.



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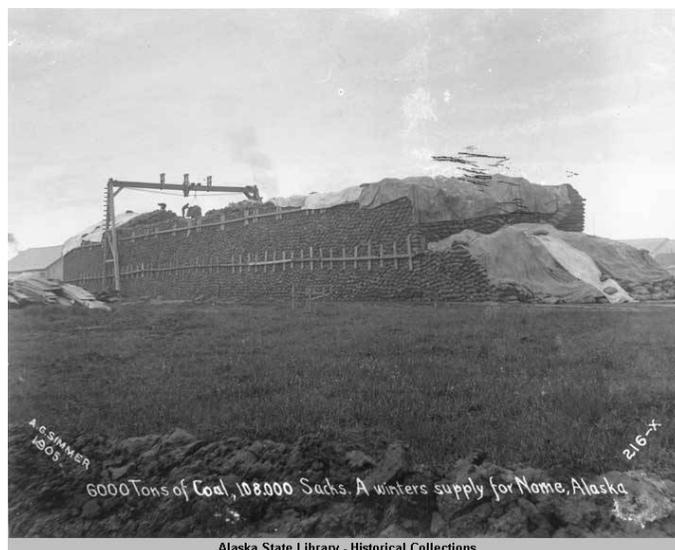
Thus it came to pass on a blistering day,
when the weather held the gold shipment at bay,
the thieves' plan went forward without a hitch
and the boxcar of gold was for another car switched
and the train less the gold was Seward-bound
the thieves went for the cache while singing a song.



Clearly well known in every small town,
truth and rumor together rebound
from church pew to work site and store to saloon
from the earliest rising to the rise of the moon
and no one is immune from gossip or hoax,
be they well-heeled, religious or broke.



When the thieves broke the lock on the purloined boxcar
to secure personal wealth in both nugget and bar
they were flummoxed and startled by what was inside;
from one wall to the other and well up all the sides
was a mountain of black rock stacked tall like a shoal
and was immediately identified as a shipment of coal.



It was never revealed how the bankers did know the boxcar of gold would be stopped by the snow on the lip of the pass where bandits would snatch coal instead of gold. So the train pulled a switch thus leaving the theft as the working of clowns and the butt of all jokes in old Seward town.



As a writer of both fiction and nonfiction, Steven Levi's motto is simple: "If you do not have something unique you have nothing." The literary world does not need another book on Alexander Hamilton or a drunk, disgraced, detective going through a divorce who is suddenly rehired by the police department for the 'biggest case in his/her career." Courtesy of the internet, America is entering a Golden Age of Literature. A decade ago, the New York publishers did not publish good books. They published books that would sell in bookstores. Today, the bookstores are gone. Now readers can find books on any subject online. Books, particularly fiction, do not have to be genre to sell; they just have to be good.

A good example of breaking out of the cement of genres are Steven Levi's "impossible crime" mysteries. An impossible crime is one where the detectives must solve HOW the crime was committed before he/she can go after the perpetrators. In *THE MATTER OF THE VANISHING GREYHOUND*, four robbers leave a bank in San Francisco with a dozen hostages, \$10 million in cash and the contents of all of the safety deposit boxes. They demand a Greyhound bus in which to escape. With the police following, the criminals vanish after they drive out onto the Golden Gate Bridge. Before the detective can apprehend the perpetrators he has to find them. And if the bandits already have the money, why do they need the hostages? Steven Levi's impossible crime novels can be found at www.authormasterminds.com.

If you prefer nonfiction, there are Steven Levi's books on the Alaska Gold Rush. So little is known of the Alaska Gold Rush most people believe the Klondike Rush – made famous by Robert Service and Jack London – *IS* the Alaska Gold Rush. Not so. The Klondike Rush was centered in Dawson in the Yukon Territory of Canada. It only lasted about 14 months. The Alaska Gold Rush lasted for 40 years, from 1880 to the First World War, and covered an area 1/5 the size of the lower 48 states. The Alaska Gold Rush was an untapped mine of fascinating events, interesting people, unique places and untold stories – until now!

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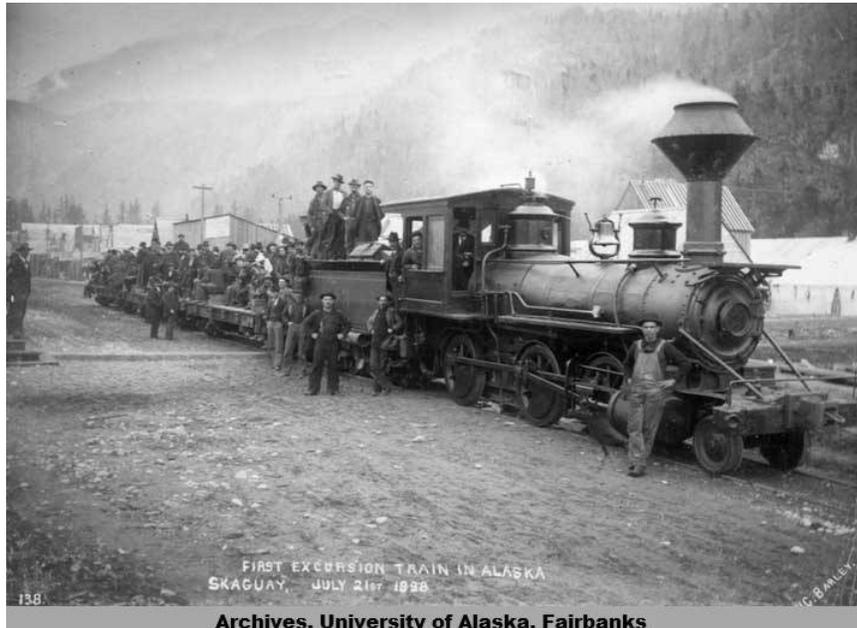
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“History is not the story of the past; it is the study of the future.”

. . . Steven Levi